



## Group Visits Area To Record Local Black History Makers

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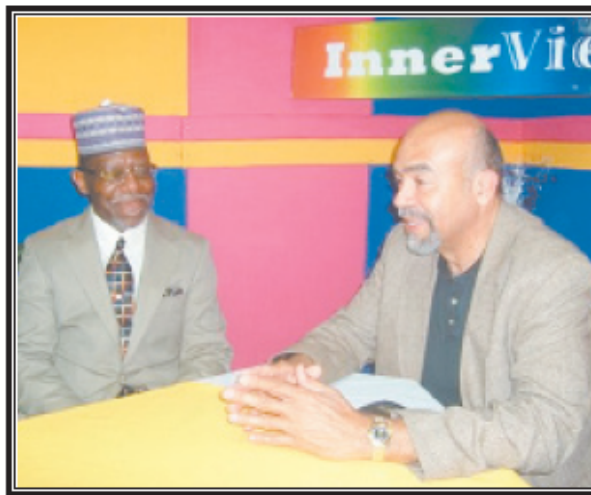
Since 1998, a non-profit organization called The History Makers has been quietly collecting hundreds of hours of oral histories from African Americans around the country. Some have prominent names and deeds; but others are not so prominent and their deeds are not so well known.

Julieanna Richardson, the founder and CEO of The History Makers, has been dispatching several team of chroniclers all over the country to record the recollections of figures, such as Harry Belafonte, Jesse Jackson, Colin Powell, Carol Moseley Braun and Angela Davis, to name a few well-known persons. These interviews have sought to reveal the most intimate details of their lives and how they connected with the famous who are long gone or still living.

"How else can we know how the work of Dr. King was got done if we did not connect how Harry Belafonte and other artists raised money to fund parts of the Modern Civil Rights Movement," said Richardson. "When we talk to Julian Bond, we find out close details of how Dr. King operated during the most dramatic days of the civil rights movement.

But Richardson said History Makers also is collecting oral histories from lesser known people in academia, religion, entertainment, education, business, politics and sports to establish the single largest archival collection of its kind in the world.

For three days last week, a History Makers crew was in Hampton Roads interviewing some 10 residents who were selected because of their unique contributions to research, religious understanding, and bringing down barriers to advancing Black institutions.



Imam Vernon Fareed is interviewed by Larry Crowe.

Larry Crowe, who led the interview team, said Norfolk 17's Andrew Heideberg and Patricia Turner were on his list. So were former President of NSU, Dr. Harrison B. Wilson, and his wife, Dr. Lucy Harrison, who was on the Norfolk School Board during the effort to halt bussing as a tool to desegregate public school in Norfolk. NSU history professor Dr. Cassandra Newby Alexander, Muslim Imam Vernon Fareed, and the first Black mayor of the city of Chesapeake, Dr. William Ward were on the list. The names listed above and others from Hampton Roads will be added to the list of 2,000-plus people whose lives have been recorded on over 7,000 hours of tape.

...see **History**, page 5



Andrew Heidelberg and Larry Crowe.

## History

Continued from page 1

The length of the recording sessions varies, for instance, from 3 hours to 12 hours, Crowe said.

He and his crew spent five hours initially with Andrew Heidelberg. His interview was done in two parts, Crowe said.

"For Heidelberg, it was a very emotional experience, recalling his life leading up to being one of the first Blacks to desegregate an all-white school," said Crowe. "It was very emotional for him to talk about being a 14-year African American male, in 1959, wading through in a sea of white faces being called nigger 500 times a day."

Not only do contributions vary, so do the ages of the interviewees; the youngest person interviewed was 29; the oldest was 110. Richardson said her two interview crews have thus far ventured to over 80 plus cities and three countries.

Just before she passed, Crowe said he interviewed Dr. Dorothy Height.

"She was a very down to earth and serious person about her works in civil and women's rights," he recalled. "She was a coal miner's daughter, not a Brahman."

Richardson works out of a facility in Chicago attached to a huge warehouse where all recorded oral histories and videos collected by the History

Makers interview team are stored.

Her organization is funded from philanthropists and grants. She has a 20-member administrative staff, researchers, writers, archivists, editors and individuals who go out and collect the oral histories.

Recently History Makers received a \$2.3 million grant from the National Science Foundation to collect oral histories of African Americans involved in the sciences.

Also, History Makers is studying various social and fraternal social organizations, such as Jack and Jill and the Boule. Richardson said Norfolk has a significant percentage of educated and middle class Blacks establishing such groups.

"What we are trying to do is to leave a legacy...detailing the lives and efforts of the famous and not so famous who made contributions to who we are as a people," said Richardson.

"Thousands of people made contributions which have not been recorded in the history books. By adding their voice, we can create a complete record of Black history."

"We are searching for stories all over the country," Richardson said. "We all know people who were not well known. Who did ordinary things, as your neighbor or civic leaders, who made their contributions toward the historical, social development of African Americans in this country."

For more information go to <http://www.thehistorymakers.com/> or call (312) 674-1900.